

SUMMER DAYS IN 1815

(From the Feb. 1, 1951 issue of the Clipper.)

How did youngsters spend their time around 1815? The anonymous author of *Duxbury Fifty Years Ago* (written in 1864) often saw boys "walking in summer days on the along-shore road of Duxbury, with trousers rolled above the knee, studying with great interest, but without a master, the art of navigation."

"The waters of the sea, flooding the wide basin, came at high tide into little coves and creeks, close up to the easterly side of this road; and there boys, with many varieties of mimic sail-craft, from sloop-rig up to ship, made trial of speed along the shore. Some of them more venturesome, made longer voyage; stripping off their clothes they disclosed shining white body and limbs in strong contrast with nut-brown face and hands; and then with froglike motion they

followed their little ships into deep waters."

At sun-down when fishermen ceased their work and "the shipwright let fall his axe and saw," the long street "was filled with workmen going northward or southward to their homes, where at open doors and windows, children with their mothers welcomed the housefathers to the sweet rest that follows toil."

On rainy days the fishermen gathered in grocery stores and shoemakers' shops (there were many cobbler shops in Tinkertown) "and told their stories of voyages to the coast of Labrador, or to the Grand Banks of Newfoundland; and skippers, boastful of their fisher-craft told how the storm rose and roared, and how the little ship weathered it." The author notes that the conversation was often coarse and ribald, but "many things go to the fashioning of a man."



The Earl Russell house on St. George St. built in the early 1800's by the Chandler sisters.

Notes on Olden Times

In 1845, when he was 84, Seth Sprague wrote *Reminiscences of the Olden Times in the Old Colony of Duxbury*.

"Duxbury," says Seth, who for 47 years was justice of the peace, "was truly a Whig town." At the time of the Revolution there were only 2 Tories in town - Major Briggs Alden, father of Major Judah Alden (hence the term "the Major's Pasture" for the land off Alden St.) and Gamaliel Bradford. After the Battle of Lexington and Concord these 2 Tories "made their recantation in writing at the Town Meeting and asked forgiveness." They were forgiven.

Marshfield was a Tory town, says Seth, and feeling ran high between the Duxbury Whigs and the Marshfield Tories. The Tories persuaded General Gage to send a company of soldiers to Marshfield. During the winter of 1775 these soldiers for 4 months lived at Dan Webster's house. Seth says they "often terrified Duxbury women."

"Immediately on news of the battle of Lexington," he says, "2 regiments of Minutemen marched towards Marshfield to take this

company of British soldiers."

One of these regiments spent the night in Duxbury, while the other camped in Marshfield 2 miles from the enemy. This delay gave the British soldiers a chance to escape on a vessel sent from Boston that night. Later the Duxbury Whigs took some weapons from certain Tory houses in Marshfield.

During the Revolution Duxbury had a Liberty Pole, as did other towns. (It was near the site of Gershom Bradford's house on Tremont St.) Other landmarks he mentions was a Duxbury cloth factory that became a tack factory; the Universal Meeting House, and the Quaker Meeting House "south of the stage office south of Sprague's Neck." There was a burying ground north of the Methodist Meeting House.

"I can remember," says Seth, "when there was not a 4-wheel carriage of any kind in the town of Duxbury and but one shay. People of that day rode almost wholly on horseback and a horse that would not carry double was considered of little value. I myself have rode many miles on horseback with my wife behind

remember when there was but one floor in Duxbury that had a carpet on it and that was of the kind that was at that time called rag coverlids. It was thought at that time to be very extravagant to put a coverlid on the floor to be tread on."

IN 1856

Duxbury, Aug. 2, 1856: The sun was so extremely hot on the 25th that it caused the wicks of the lamps in the Gurnet light house, they being covered with spirits of turpentine, to ignite 2 or 3 times.

"Died, in Duxbury, last week, 'Old Jim,' a horse owned by G. B. Weston, Esq., aged 43. He has been able to draw a ton all along up to the time of his death."

The same issue of *The Union* reports a family by the name of Drew in Duxbury, "composed of 2 brothers and 4 sisters, whose united age amounts to 495 years, and the average of whose ages is 82½. The oldest brother is 90, the next brother 89, and the sisters respectively 86, 79, 77 and 74."

Community activities were

buzzing in 1856 even as now. The Hon. Gershom Weston of Duxbury represented the town at the temperance convention held at Abington the preceding Wednesday. Here's another item: "School Pic Nic. - On Tuesday next, in the grove near Whittemore Peterson's, West Duxbury, there is to be a school picnic, where it is expected that children and parents will have a good time." Also, "The Sabbath School connected with the West Methodist Church in Duxbury are to have a pic-nic gathering at Pine Point, on Aug. 11."

As for weather, there was severe hail storm in Nor Duxbury on July 29, 1856. "One man saw hail stones as large as cent. It laid the grain fields even with the earth. The storm was accompanied by a violent wind. is feared it has injured the corn fields beyond recovery."

George Faunce was amusing the townsfolk by sending small balloons. "We understand he intends to send a large one up the next easterly wind, in the hope that it will visit some of the inland towns." Some fun, what?